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ABSTRACT

The Queensland (Australia) Department of Education's "Corporate Plan 1994-98" identifies student learning and teaching as a key issue and includes effective learning and teaching as a corporate value. This document provides information on five guiding principles that have been formulated for the development and implementation of quality learning programs in Queensland state schools. The principles are that effective learning and teaching: (1) is founded on an understanding of the learner; (2) requires active construction of meaning; (3) enhances and is enhanced by a supportive and challenging environment; (4) is enhanced through worthwhile learning partnerships; (5) shapes and responds to social and cultural contexts. These principles are based on six assumptions: every person is a learner; learning is an ongoing and lifelong process; people learn within social and cultural contexts, independently and through interaction with others; what is learned depends on the way it is learned and with whom it is learned; the vital aspects of teaching include identifying the ways others learn best and extending the ways they learn, creating learning opportunities, and evaluating learning outcomes; and principles of effective learning and teaching provide the basis for ongoing improvement of learning and teaching practices. The principles of effective learning and teaching apply to all sectors of schooling. (ND)

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Principles of effective learning and teaching

Introduction

The Queensland Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all students attending state schools are provided with the opportunity to obtain a comprehensive, balanced and equitable education. Such an education promotes the holistic development of each individual, and ensures that students are provided with opportunities to prepare them for their present and future life roles.

Central to the state education system is the continuous task of exploring ways to improve learning and teaching. The department's commitment to this task is evident in its *Corporate Plan 1994-98* which identifies student learning and teaching as a key issue and includes effective learning and teaching as a corporate value. To further promote effective learning and teaching, five guiding principles have been formulated for the development and implementation of quality learning programs in Queensland state schools. These principles are expected to underpin learning and teaching practices across all sectors of schooling.

The principles are as follows:

Effective learning and teaching is founded on an understanding of the learner.

Effective learning and teaching requires active construction of meaning.

Effective learning and teaching enhances and is enhanced by a supportive and challenging environment.

Effective learning and teaching is enhanced through worthwhile learning partnerships.

Effective learning and teaching shapes and responds to social and cultural contexts.

These principles acknowledge the complex and dynamic nature of the learning-teaching process. They are based on the premise that to learn is to make meaning from experience. They acknowledge the impact of such factors as attitudes, perceptions, expectations, abilities, gender, sociocultural background and maturity on every learning experience. They also recognise the learner's capacity to continually extend and refine knowledge. Collectively, the principles emphasise that an essential ingredient of effective teaching is the modelling of a commitment to learning.

Later in this document, each principle is listed separately with explanatory points. These points provide more detail about each principle through specific references to processes and practices. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive, nor is there any implied meaning in the order of the points.

Although stated separately, the five principles are interrelated and some explanatory points apply to more than one principle. In essence, the principles emphasise the need to:

- understand the learner
- understand the learning process
- provide a supportive and challenging environment
- establish worthwhile learning partnerships
- shape and respond to a variety of social and cultural contexts.

Assumptions

The principles are based on the following assumptions:

- Every person is a learner.
- Learning is an ongoing and lifelong process.
- People learn within social and cultural contexts, independently and through interaction with others.
- What is learned depends on the way it is learned and with whom it is learned.
- The vital aspects of teaching include identifying the ways others learn best and extending the ways they learn, creating learning opportunities, and evaluating learning outcomes.
- Principles of effective learning and teaching provide the basis for ongoing improvement of learning and teaching practices.

These assumptions suggest that the learning-teaching process is multifaceted in terms of what is learned, how it is learned and the roles of participants.

Students develop knowledge about the topics covered in the curriculum. They learn social norms and values from the ways people behave at school as well as in society. And, by reflecting on the actions and processes by

which they learn, students develop an understanding about the ways they learn.

Teachers continually learn about ways people learn—the processes of learning and how individuals learn best. They learn *about* their students as individuals, and learn *with* as well as *from* their students when they seek knowledge together.

Teachers bring their own social and cultural values to the learning-teaching process. These values can be different from those held by other members of the school community. Recognising these differences in values, and developing programs and practices that respect the differences, represents another aspect of learning.

Every student and teacher, therefore, experiences many different aspects of learning. The extent and number of aspects increases with the number of participants—i.e. when **school administrators, parents, caregivers, paraprofessionals, specialist support teachers and other community members** participate, further dimensions are added to the learning-teaching process. Consequently, the principles of effective learning and teaching should apply to all facets of the school's operations. In addition, learning and teaching needs to be a cooperative effort. It is not the exclusive responsibility of the student nor the teacher. Responsibility for the overall outcome is shared. All individuals and groups can contribute to the learning-teaching process, and the outcomes will be richer when more people contribute.

Definitions

As described above, the assumptions lead to the following definitions.

Learning	Learning is the process of making meaning out of experience.
Teaching	Teaching is the process of guiding and facilitating learning.
Learner	The term 'learner' primarily refers to the student; however, all individuals involved in the learning-teaching process are learning. The term 'learner' therefore applies to teachers, school administrators, parents and anyone else involved in the learning-teaching process.
Teacher	The term 'teacher' primarily refers to a qualified professional in the educational field whose actions guide or facilitate learning. There are times, however, when the role of teacher is adopted by students, school administrators, parents, caregivers, paraprofessionals, specialist support teachers and other community members.

Note: The term 'effective learning and teaching' emphasises the interrelationship of learning and teaching. To be effective, learning and teaching must be complementary. They are therefore considered one process and the term is used throughout this document with singular verbs.

Effective learning and teaching is founded on an understanding of the learner.

Understanding the learner involves:

- identifying features of the learner's past and present experiences, and respecting the influence of these features on the learner's personal development;
- recognising factors—such as location, gender, ethnicity, ability, disability, and socioeconomic and political circumstances—that place the learner within power relationships in the learning context as well as in society;
- recognising and supporting each learner's motivation and capacity to challenge and change his or her current circumstances;
- promoting continuity of experience by identifying, valuing, linking to, and extending from, prior knowledge and experience;
- taking into account relevance and meaning for the learner;
- identifying and catering for the needs, interests and abilities of individual learners and groups of learners;
- recognising and addressing the expectations and aspirations of the learner;
- recognising the impact of others' expectations on the learner;
- promoting the creative potential of each learner;
- recognising an individual's preferred learning styles, and promoting the development of other learning styles;
- recognising and supporting the holistic development of the learner—intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, ethically and spiritually.



Effective learning and teaching requires active construction of meaning.

Learners construct meaning when they:

- challenge their own knowledge and understanding, and respond to the challenges of others;
- participate in a variety of formal and informal social and cultural interactions;
- explore, and develop an openness to, the diversity of knowledge, understanding, values and beliefs;
- take appropriate risks and learn from 'mistakes';
- reflect critically on their own and others' knowledge, actions and assumptions, including those relating to gender, race and class;
- develop a range of thinking processes including divergent, convergent, lateral, critical and creative thinking;
- achieve success and have a sense of progress in their learning;
- explore and manipulate concrete materials;
- explore practical and purposeful contexts;
- build knowledge and understanding by linking to what is already known;
- negotiate, make choices in, and take their share of responsibility for learning;
- engage in, and reflect on, learning opportunities created through the application of teachers' professional expertise and practical experience;
- reflect on and discuss the process of learning and teaching.



Effective learning and teaching enhances and is enhanced by a supportive and challenging environment.

A supportive and challenging environment is characterised by:

- a climate that emphasises care, support and quality relationships based on mutual respect for all involved in the learning-teaching process;
- a climate that values effort, presents achievable but challenging expectations, builds self-esteem and encourages learners to become responsible and independent;
- effective communication among all learners;
- cooperative planning, implementation and evaluation of programs for continuity of learning;
- equitable access to, and flexible use of, quality human and material resources which are appropriate to the needs of learners;
- experiences that are sensitive to the needs of learners and encourage timely intervention by a range of professionals;
- experiences that reflect an appreciation of different views, opinions, values and beliefs;
- diverse, yet relevant, experiences that use the school and wider community as contexts for learning;
- parents, caregivers and other community members supporting the learning-teaching process as partners or skilled participants;
- experiences that motivate learners and promote enjoyment, achievement and satisfaction from learning;
- experiences that cater for different ways and rates of learning;
- flexible procedures and predictable routines.



Effective learning and teaching is enhanced through worthwhile learning partnerships.

Worthwhile learning partnerships develop in a variety of contexts when:

- learners and teachers seek knowledge together;
- teachers are active learners, and learners have the opportunity to teach others;
- learners and teachers communicate their expectations and achievements;
- learners and teachers encourage interaction and respond to the opportunities that arise from them;
- learners and teachers demonstrate their enthusiasm and commitment to learning through their actions and approaches;
- learners and teachers take time to reflect critically and creatively on their practices;
- learners and teachers review and plan together for a shared purpose;
- learners and teachers share accountability for outcomes;
- learners have the confidence and are given the opportunity and guidance to display leadership;
- learners and teachers share in planning, learning and assessment;
- school administrators, parents, caregivers, paraprofessionals, specialist support teachers and other members of the community participate in the learning-teaching process.



Effective learning and teaching shapes and responds to social and cultural contexts.

The learning-teaching process shapes and responds to social and cultural contexts when:

- learners develop attitudes, knowledge, skills and processes which enable them to contribute and respond to change within the community;
- all learners have equitable access to and participation in all aspects of the learning-teaching process, regardless of location, gender, ethnicity, ability, disability or socioeconomic circumstances;
- all groups of learners achieve success based on realistic and challenging expectations;
- learners participate as active and informed citizens in Australia's diverse society;
- individual diversity as well as the perspectives, contributions and experiences of diverse social and cultural groups is included and valued;
- critical reflection on the past and present informs future decisions;
- learners explore the impact of the construction of gender, ethnicity, disability and social class on their lives and the lives of others;
- learners develop skills for challenging discrimination arising from the construction of gender, ethnicity, disability and social class.





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